

All South Carolinians are proud of David Wilkins making history by becoming an ambassador to our appreciated northern neighbor. In 1994, he made history to become the first Republican Speaker of the House of a Southern legislature in the 20th century, followed by many speakers, from Austin to Richmond.

Godspeed, David and Susan.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

THANKS FOR ADDRESSING THE VITAL ISSUE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Madam Speaker, tonight our President addressed the Nation on the issue of Social Security reform, a vital issue not just for current retirees, but for generations to come. I want to praise what the President had to say tonight.

This is one of the most major issues that we can take on as a Congress, the largest single issue we can take on here in the United States House of Representatives, so I think it is important that we say thank you to the President for taking on this important and vital issue that generations of Americans have relied upon.

Social Security is important. We do not want to break it, we want to improve it and make sure it is a lasting institution, not just for those retirees today and those that are close to retirement, but for those of my generation, the Generation X-ers, who believe that Social Security will not be around for them. Also, we need to have personal private personal retirement accounts as part of Social Security.

Thank you, Mr. President, for addressing this vital issue.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss MCMORRIS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

SMART SECURITY AND MISSION UNACCOMPLISHED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, over the last few months, the Iraqi people have been making strides toward democracy by holding elections, nominating ministers and working on a draft constitution. I congratulate the people of Iraq for their very brave efforts, efforts that I am certain were intended to take Iraq back for the people of Iraq.

Though admirable, none of Iraq's recent advances validate the false pre-

tenses that caused the United States to fight a war in a country that never threatened us, never attacked us and never posed a threat to our way of life. But, sadly, despite the false pretenses under which this war was fought, President Bush and his administration have continued to insist that Iraq is close to becoming a stable and viable democracy. The President claims that the war in Iraq is going well and that our military is succeeding.

Madam Speaker, I do not know about you, but I do not consider the deaths of over 1,500 American soldiers and countless tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians and no end in sight as a military success.

Yet, declaring success in the very face of chaos is nothing new for this President. May 2 is the second anniversary of his speech declaring "an end to major combat operations" under a banner declaring "mission accomplished." Mission accomplished.

One year later, many experts have different opinions. In fact, earlier today I participated in an event with Daniel Ellsberg, the author of the Pentagon Papers, which revealed that President Richard Nixon was deceiving the American people about the role America played in the Vietnam War. From his past experience, Mr. Ellsberg believes that Iraq will not be safe for years to come and that the Bush administration seems eager to maintain high troop levels in the country for the foreseeable future. To what end, he and I both ask?

I question that if there are 150,000 fully-trained Iraqi soldiers, as the President claims, then why are America's 150,000 troops still in Iraq? Why do they remain there as sitting ducks for drive-by shootings and car bombings?

Unfortunately, I believe that the reason is the Bush administration is gearing up for a sustained military occupation of Iraq, with access to oil having more to do with that occupation than our government admits.

Evidence certainly points to an occupation that will not end any time soon. The Bush administration has specifically sought funds for 14 military bases in Iraq, claiming they are not permanent. The very idea of funding American military bases in Iraq more than suggests that President Bush is not serious about turning Iraq over to the Iraqis any time soon. In fact, Daniel Ellsberg believes that the U.S. occupation of Iraq could last longer than the U.S. occupation of Vietnam in the 1970s, which persisted for a total of 16 years. This should scare everyone who values peace, who values democracy and fiscal sanity.

The possibility that the United States could maintain a military presence in Iraq for years to come is dangerous; dangerous to our foreign policy and inconsistent with the values that most Americans hold dear.

Fortunately, however, the continued occupation of Iraq has the American people talking seriously about a with-

drawal. That is why I introduced H. Con. Res. 35 in January of this year, legislation calling for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq. By removing American troops, we will remove the main focus of the insurgents' rage. Bringing our troops home is the only way to keep them safe and out of harm's way.

Everyone likes to talk about supporting the troops. Well, it is time to truly support our troops, by bringing them home, and we should begin that effort today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE CLEAR ACT OF 2005 AND THE MINUTEMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Madam Speaker, this month the Minuteman Project has accomplished with just a few hundred citizen volunteers what the Federal Government has been unable to do and actually told us was impossible to do, and that is stopping illegal immigrants crossing our borders.

In the process of focusing the Nation's attention on the insecurity of our borders, they have succeeded in bringing new information to the debate on the overall immigration crisis in this Nation. The new information is critical to this body's consideration of a specific policy area, probably and frankly the one area in which all Americans should be in 100 percent agreement, and that is protecting Americans from criminal illegal immigrants.

U.S. Border Patrol Sector Chief Michael Nicely is head of the entire 260 mile long Tucson Sector of our border, the worst in the Nation for illegal immigration, and the same sector where the Minutemen shutdown a 23 mile portion of that sector.

What should be horrifying to all Americans is what Chief Nicely told Government Executive Magazine just last week. He says that since November, the Border Patrol agents have caught 17,000 criminal illegal aliens trying to enter our country through just through this one 260 mile sector; 17,000 criminal illegal aliens. That is not total illegal aliens now, just the criminals. Overall, Chief Nicely's sector has arrested more than a quarter of a million people trying to enter this country illegally just since Thanksgiving.

Last year, I introduced legislation specifically targeting against criminal illegal aliens. The Clear Law Enforcement For Criminal Aliens Removal

Act, or we call it the CLEAR Act, gained the support of some 125 Members. Our purpose is fairly simple: State and local law enforcement personnel would be fully authorized to investigate, apprehend, and, if necessary, remove criminal aliens in the United States.

Already this year our Justice Department has asked for help from local law enforcement on this issue. According to Reuters News, the Bush administration now recognizes that, "The United States has freed numerous illegal aliens into the community who are dangerous murderers, rapists and child molesters under a legal loophole created by Supreme Court decisions, and that "Congress should urgently pass legislation to close this loophole, which has already resulted in the release of several extremely violent offenders, with others scheduled to be released soon."

According to the report, U.S. Justice Department Deputy Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Cohn made this request of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on March 14.

We have the legislative draft to do just what they want, this year's pending version of the CLEAR Act. We plan to introduce the 2005 version within the next few weeks. We do welcome constructive input from the administration, from Members of both parties and members of both houses. But from what we have learned thus far from the Minuteman Project, the CLEAR Act cannot be a stand-alone remedy for stopping the hordes of vicious foreign criminals invading our country to murder, rape and molest Americans.

My one bill will not do it, not by itself. We can provide local and State law enforcement with the tools to remove these criminal elements through guaranteed deportation. We can help Homeland Security do their job. But it does little if they can simply pour back across unsecured borders. You have gotten nothing done.

The CLEAR Act, therefore, will become a critical component of overall immigration and border reform. I urge every Member in this body to join in this effort with the CLEAR Act. In return, I pledge to support whatever legislative measures that are necessary to secure our borders. That includes a total military closing, if necessary, to stop these criminals. I fully understand the meaning of "closing," even if it is a temporary closing. It is a time we in this body are going to be able to declare whose side are we on.

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Are we on the side of fellow Americans, or are we on the side of those of the new world order who want no borders? It is that simple. The vote will come down to just that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss McMORRIS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon

(Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

IN SUPPORT OF LIEUTENANT PANTANO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, today is the third day of the Article 32 hearing for Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, a Marine who I have talked about here on the floor at great length and who has served our Nation bravely in both Gulf wars.

In an action of self-defense a year ago in Iraq, Lieutenant Pantano made a split-second, battlefield decision to shoot two Iraqi insurgents who refused to follow his orders to stop their movement towards him. Two and a half months later, a sergeant under his command, who never even saw the shooting and who was earlier demoted for his lack of leadership abilities, accused him of murder. Because of that, Lieutenant Pantano today continues to face an Article 32 hearing where a hearing officer will determine whether he will face a court martial for two counts of premeditated murder.

Last night I described how yesterday's hearing came to a halt when it became apparent that Lieutenant Pantano's accuser, Sergeant Coburn, had recently violated his superior's orders not to give an interview on this case. The defense showed that he was interviewed for various media outlets, including last week's New York Magazine cover story on the case.

In fact, Sergeant Coburn may now face charges for disobeying orders, and he left the stand yesterday after the hearing officer recommended he get an attorney.

Madam Speaker, it seems obvious that this man's testimony cannot be considered credible. How can these charges move forward when the primary witness is someone who did not actually see the shooting and who may now face charges for disobeying serious orders about the case?

Let me also quote from Navy Medical Corpsman George Gobles, the only other person present at the time of the shooting, and the prosecution's other main witness who took the stand yesterday. He called Pantano "a damn good leader." He continued to testify:

"I felt the safest with, you know, this platoon because more than anything, because of Lieutenant Pantano, because of his leadership."

Madam Speaker, as I have said many times before, Lieutenant Pantano is by all accounts an exceptional Marine. I hope that yesterday's proceedings have finally begun to bring out the truth in this case. I pray that the end is near so that Pantano's family can put this behind them and move forward with their lives. I hope that in the next day or two, as this hearing ends, the hearing officer comes to the same conclusion that I and many like me have come to, that Lieutenant Pantano should never have been charged in the first place, and that all charges against him are dropped. I hope and I pray that the truth will prevail.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I continue to ask my colleagues to research the case and consider supporting House Resolution 167, my bill to help support Lieutenant Pantano as he faces this battle. I encourage them to visit his mother's Web site at www.defendthedefenders.org and learn more about this fine young Marine, and I would be proud to call him my son or my son-in-law.

I close by asking the good Lord in heaven to please bless Lieutenant Pantano and his family, and by asking the good Lord in heaven to please continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and I ask the good Lord in heaven to continue to bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.